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ABSTRACT

This paper was written in response to the Idaho Teacher Excellence Program (part of the Idaho School Improvement Act of 1984) to assist districts in developing teacher appraisal programs. Central to effective teacher appraisal systems is a clearly defined purpose, i.e., the improvement of instruction. The system used should distinguish between evaluation of teaching ability and evaluation of teachers, and should be limited to evaluating the teacher's classroom effectiveness. Thorough training of administrators and teachers is an absolute necessity for the evaluation process. Such training ensures that an understanding of a definition for good teaching is present in the evaluation process. Two teacher appraisal instruments are presented. The first is an adapted instrument that is intended as a reference point for developing an appraisal guide. The second includes lists of evaluation items under five categories. An appraisal instrument could use items from this list with a three point scale. Alternative data sources that can be included in evaluation are student evaluations and artifact collection (including lesson guides, assignments, tests, and practice activities). The appraisal system in a school district should be collaboratively developed. (MD)

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TEACHER APPRAISAL FOR CAREER LADDERS

Mary Nottingham, Ed.D.

1985

The Challenge

School districts in Idaho face a new challenge. The challenge is contained in the Teacher Excellence Program that is a part of HB 475, the Idaho School Improvement Act of 1984.

The Teacher Excellence Program calls for school districts that wish to participate to develop a career ladder plan. There is flexibility built into the guidelines for these plans, but a requirement that seems sure to be universal is teacher appraisal. In any career ladder plan, decisions must ultimately be made concerning who gets what.

This paper was written to assist those districts that do not have a satisfactory teacher appraisal program in place. It draws heavily on the work of Thomas McGreal, Madeline Hunter, Russell Joki, Jack Dawson, Richard Manatt, Kenneth Palmer and Everett Hidlebaugh. It is an attempt to synthesize information from a variety of sources and from experience into a reasonable set of appraisal procedures that could be used in the successful implementation of a teacher excellence--career ladder program.

The Purpose of Teacher Appraisal

One of the keys to effective teacher appraisal systems is a clearly defined purpose. It must be understood that the goal of a career ladder program is the improvement of instruction. The appraisal system should emphasize and reinforce that goal. This positive orientation is especially important in affecting the attitudes of teachers toward the appraisal system to be used.

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Evaluating Teaching vs. Teachers

The distinction to be made here is related to the purpose of the appraisal discussed above. Appraisal for the improvement of instruction should focus on teaching, i.e., classroom-teacher behavior.

Evaluation instruments often extend appraisal to issues outside the classroom. Teachers generally respond favorably to reasonable school rules and to administrative requests for service and information. When they do not, the administrator should deal with that issue at that time, but it should not become a part of the appraisal of teaching.

This separation of the evaluation of teaching from the evaluation of teachers is a subtle, but powerful, distinction. Failing to get a report in on time or being late to school are rule violations that might best be handled by a "one minute reprimand."[1] These issues should not become a part of the teacher-appraisal program. Teacher appraisal for the improvement of instruction should be focused upon and limited to instruction, that is, classroom effectiveness.

McGreal specifically recommends the separation of in-class and out-of-class appraisal.[2] Manatt, et al, include out-of-class activities in their list of appraisal items but agree that those items can be deleted with no loss of effectiveness.[3] It is argued here that out-of-class items should not be included because the focus on the improvement of instruction is diluted by these issues. The potential for negative reactions to the appraisal process is thus enhanced.

Training Requirements

There is general agreement among the authors cited that thorough training is an absolute necessity for the implementation of effective teacher-appraisal systems--training of administrators and teachers. Since

teacher appraisal is at the heart of a career ladder plan, training requirements are self-evident.

Specifically, training is necessary (1) to identify and clarify expectations, (2) to define and clarify terms and (3) to sharpen data-gathering skills. Teachers and administrators in a school need training in order to make a cooperative effort toward establishing shared expectations on the elements of effective instruction. A shared understanding and language to define basic principles present in good teaching are required. These basic principles should be based upon authoritative work in the field of education. They are the foundation for the training of teachers and administrators involved in the Teacher Excellence Program.

Those involved in using the appraisal instrument must also be skilled in gathering objective evidence that supports (from both the principals' and teachers' viewpoints) the ratings given on the appraisal instrument. The goal is for the teacher and the appraiser to recognize what the teacher is doing when s/he teaches, why the teacher is choosing to do what s/he does, and how the teacher is affecting student learning. If the rater does not recognize effective (or ineffective) teaching when s/he sees it and/or is unable to support that judgment with objective evidence, the system will lose appeal quickly.[4]

Teacher-Appraisal Instrumentation

Two teacher-appraisal instruments are illustrated here. The first was adapted from the work of Madeline Hunter[4] and Russell Joki[5]. As a result of mutual training within a given school district, this instrument will, no doubt, be modified. It is not intended for use "as is" but as a point of departure for teachers and administrators interested in the development of an appraisal guide about which they can mutually agree.

For example, item 5 suggests that the principal can determine whether or not the teacher is adjusting instruction for the different needs of students. In some settings, such a judgment may not be possible because the principal will not know the students as well as the teacher. Agreement with this view would result in the deletion of item 5 from the instrument. Every item on the instrument is subject to this kind of review and possible modification

It should also be noted that the explanatory phrases for each item can be changed. More descriptive terms might be devised.

Finally, it may be necessary to use the instrument for a period of time to test its validity. It is possible to establish district norms or expectations for each of the items or for the instrument as a whole. For example, a teacher eligible for the top rung of the career ladder might be required to get straight "Cs" on the instrument.

THE APPRAISAL OF TEACHING

Name of Teacher_____ Date_____

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1. ANTICIPATORY OR ADVANCED ORGANIZER SET FOR THE LESSON

(a)	(b)	(c)
No preparatory action or discussion	Present, but too limited	Clear and deliberate use of advanced organizers--motivating in nature

Evidence:

2. TEACHING TO AN OBJECTIVE

(a)	(b)	(c)
No reference to objectives	Reference to, but no emphasis on objectives	Objectives clear and emphasized

Objectives need not always be in writing, but the teacher uses objectives to focus academic learning tasks.

Evidence:

3. INPUT

(a)	(b)	(c)
No evidence of input	References, discussion, demonstrations or lectures for input	Clear and concise input strategies

Evidence:

4. CORRECT LEVEL OF DIFFICULTY

(a)	(b)	(c)
Too easy/hard for almost all	Right for some, not for others	Just right for almost all

Planning and use of objectives take into account the differing skill levels, sophistication and learning styles of the students.

Evidence:

5. MONITORING AND ADJUSTING TO STUDENT NEEDS

(a) No monitoring or adjustment	(b) Monitoring inadequate or ineffective	(c) Monitoring appropriate or unnecessary

During presentation and practice steps of a lesson, the teacher monitors pupil participation and understanding, and may adjust the strategy.

Evidence:

6. COMMAND OF SUBJECT MATTER

(a) Unsure and uncomfortable	(b) Adequate background in subject	(c) Confident delivery with solid background

Uses district curriculum. Teaching assignment must fit teacher subject-matter preparation.

Evidence:

7. CHECKING FOR UNDERSTANDING

(a) No effort to check for understanding	(b) Limited concern	(c) Frequent checking by teacher

Evidence:

8. ROOM ENVIRONMENT

(a) Disorganized or sterile	(b) Cluttered or little attention to environment, but functional	(c) Attractive, appropriately organized and productive

Evidence:

9. CLIMATE

(a) Little humor; no evidence of an attempt to establish rapport.	(b) Reasonably productive.	(c) A feeling of belonging, humor, and high expectations for achievement prevails.

Evidence:

*10. USE OF THE PRINCIPLES OF LEARNING

(a) Almost no use of principles	(b) Knowledge of principles evident	(c) Constant use of principles

The teacher reinforces, motivates, teaches for transfer and retention, plans for pacing, and uses varying degrees of complexity to match learner sophistication.

Evidence:

*To be used only if both principal and teacher know and can apply principles of learning.

Rater_____

Date_____

* * * * * * * * * *

The items listed below are taken from the work of Manatt, et al.[6] These items fall into five categories, the last of which could well be deleted. The items are arranged in order of discriminating power under each heading.

District personnel could devise an appraisal instrument by drawing items from this list. A three-point scale could be used with the selected items, i.e., "superior performance;" "meets district standard;" or "needs improvement." Acceptable standards could be established as with the first instrument.

DISCRIMINATING EVALUATION ITEMS

Productive Teaching Techniques

1. The teacher uses probing questions for understanding of concepts and relationships, and for feedback to the teacher.
2. The teacher uses student ideas in instruction.
3. The teacher uses structuring comments, such as examples, to serve as advance organizers.
4. The teacher uses varied teaching strategies and materials that stimulate student learning.
5. The teacher explains things well, puts ideas across logically and in an orderly way.
6. The teacher provides opportunities for pupils to learn material on which they will later be tested.

Positive Interpersonal Relations

1. The teacher shows respect for his/her pupils.
2. The teacher is tolerant of students whose ideas differ from his/hers.
3. The teacher uses supportive criticism rather than blame, shame or sarcasm.
4. The teacher is readily available to students.
5. The teacher is fair and impartial in treatment of pupils.
6. The teacher provides opportunities for all pupils to explain success.

Organized/Structured Class Management

1. The teacher constantly monitors pupil progress and adjusts the pace accordingly.
2. The teacher presents material in a well-organized fashion in order to use class time efficiently.
3. The teacher has well-defined objectives for his/her pupils, and works toward them.
4. The teacher uses pupil assignments that are relevant and sufficient for in-depth learning.
5. The teacher is task-oriented but flexible and maintains a sense of humor.
6. The teacher keeps the "difficulty level of instruction" appropriate for each individual.

Intellectual Stimulation

1. The teacher inspires students to seek more knowledge.
2. The teacher is a caring person.
3. The teacher is enthusiastic.
4. The teacher sustains pupil attention and interest with activities appropriate to various pupil levels.
5. The teacher and pupils share in the enjoyment of humorous situations.

Desirable Out-Of-Class Behavior (if the goal is to evaluate teaching, this section should be deleted)

1. The teacher is a good team worker.
2. The teacher strives for improvement through positive participation in professional growth activities.
3. The teacher assumes responsibilities outside the classroom as they relate to school.
4. The teacher is committed to the primary goal of assisting pupil growth.
5. The teacher utilizes community resources in instruction.
6. The teacher effectively reports pupil progress to parents.

Objectives

The authors cited here are unanimous about the use of objectives. Mutual objective-setting between the principal and teacher form the foundation for improvement and for subsequent appraisals.

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Alternative Data Sources

In some situations, principals may need additional evaluative data beyond that acquired from classroom observations but still focusing on the teaching act. Teachers may also express interest in alternative sources of data, particularly if they are part of a collegial team of teachers striving for self-improvement.[7]

Student Evaluation

Soliciting student input by teachers as an evaluation data source can be effective if care is exercised in eliciting responses and in structuring the student instrument. Student evaluation appears to be most relevant when it is based upon descriptive statements and does not rely upon personal rating items. Students should be asked what occurs or what exists in a classroom. For example, "Everyone is treated fairly in here" or "This class is always well planned" are items that avoid having students make judgments about the teacher. Results should be shared with the principal and/or collegial team.

Artifact Collection

Another source of data about the teaching act involves collecting artifacts. Artifacts include lesson guides, assignments, tests and practice activities. Reviewing teacher artifacts can be both important and valuable in view of recent research which indicates that more than half of a student's school day may be involved with seat work.

Collaborative Effort

The appraisal system in a school district should be collaboratively developed. Improving schools requires a collegial atmosphere where teachers and administrators have developed an agreed-upon language to describe teaching. This description can then become the basis for a mutually satisfactory system of appraisal.

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